



PATENT APPLICATION
IN THE UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

In re application of

Ryuji SHIOZAKI, et al.

Appln. No.: 10/500,819

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For: POSITIVE ACTIVE MATERIALS AND

NON-AQUEOUS ELECTROLYTE BATTERIES EMPLOYING THE SAME

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STATEMENT

Assistant Commissioner for Patents

Alexandria, VA 22313-1450

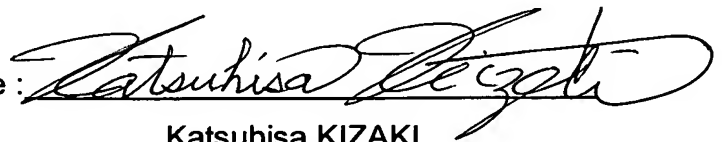
Sir/Madam:

I, Katsuhisa KIZAKI, residing at 70-10, Shinmachi 3-chome, Ome-shi,
Tokyo, Japan hereby state that:

I well understand the Japanese and English languages and attached is
an accurate English translation made by me of Japanese Patent Application No.
2002-088229 filed March 27, 2002.

Date : August 27, 2008

Name :



Katsuhisa KIZAKI

[Designation of Document] Specification

[Title of the Invention] Positive Active Materials and
Non-Aqueous Electrolyte Batteries Employing the Same

[Claims]

[Claim 1] A positive active material comprising a
composite oxide which is constituted of at least lithium
(Li), manganese (Mn), nickel (Ni), cobalt (Co), and oxygen
(O) and is represented by the following chemical
composition formula:

$\text{Li}_a\text{Mn}_b\text{Ni}_c\text{Co}_d\text{O}_e$ (Chemical composition formula 1)

(wherein $0 < a < 1.3$

$|b - c| < 0.03$

$0.8 \leq d < 1$

$1.7 \leq e \leq 2.3$

$b + c + d = 1$).

[Claim 2] A non-aqueous electrolyte battery having a
positive electrode containing the positive active material
of claim 1, a negative electrode, and a non-aqueous
electrolyte.

[Detailed Description of the Invention]

[0001]

[Technical Field to which the Invention Belongs]

The present invention relates to a non-aqueous
electrolyte secondary battery excellent in excellent in
high-rate discharge performance and high-temperature

charge performance.

[0002]

[Prior Art]

Non-aqueous electrolyte secondary batteries such as lithium secondary batteries are extensively used as power sources for small portable terminals, mobile communication apparatus, and the like because these batteries have a high energy density and a high voltage can be taken out thereof.

[0003]

At present, an Li-Co composite oxide having a layer structure belonging to the space group $R\bar{3}m$ (hereinafter referred to also as LiCoO_2) is mainly used as a positive active material in lithium secondary batteries for small public-use applications. The reasons for this are that the LiCoO_2 shows a flat discharge potential at around 3.9 V (vs. Li/Li^+) and that since the delay grade of lithium ion diffusion in the solid LiCoO_2 phase even in the final stage of discharge is small, the discharge polarization accompanying on the delay can be diminished and high energy can be taken out over a prolonged time period. In addition, even when lithium ions are extracted to about 4.3 V (vs. Li/Li^+) in the charge direction, the crystal structure retains a rhombohedral crystal and, hence, the composite oxide is excellent also in charge/discharge

cycle performance. As described above, the LiCoO_2 is a positive active material which has a high energy density and satisfactory charge/discharge cycle performance.

[0004]

With respect to expressions of space groups, the expression "R3m" should originally bear a bar (lateral line) affixed over the numeral "3". In this description, however, the expression "R3/m" is used for convenience so as to show the same meaning.

[0005]

Positive active materials likewise having an operating potential at around 4 V include lithium nickelate (LiNiO_2). However, the LiNiO_2 has problems that it has a lower discharge potential than the LiCoO_2 although it has a high theoretical discharge capacity, and that the active material has poor thermal stability in charged state. There are hence many unsolved problems in putting this active material into practical use.

[0006]

Lithium manganate (LiMn_2O_4) also can be made to have an operating potential around 4 V and to show a flat discharge potential by partly displacing the manganese sites by lithium. However, there has been a problem that this active material has a low theoretical discharge capacity and a problem that a manganese species dissolves

away from the active material in a high-temperature environment and this causes a decrease in battery performance. It is explained that the problem of this manganese species dissolution is attributable to the Jahn-Teller strain of trivalent manganese.

[0007]

Many investigations are being made also on materials represented by the chemical composition formula $\text{LiCo}_x\text{Ni}_{1-x}\text{O}_2$. This kind of active material is thought to be based on the idea that the merits of both of two active materials, i.e., LiCoO_2 and LiNiO_2 , are imparted by utilizing the fact that LiCoO_2 - LiNiO_2 forms a solid solution throughout the whole compositional range. However, due to the introduction of nickel, this active material also has poorer thermal stability during charge than the LiCoO_2 described above. In this point, this active material is not superior in properties to the LiCoO_2 .

[0008]

[Problems that the Invention is to Solve]

Since the LiCoO_2 shows most satisfactory performances among the currently known active materials of the 4-V class, it has come to be used almost exclusively in the market for small public-use appliances. However, the recent trend toward higher performances in small

communication apparatus is remarkable and there is a strong desire for a further improvement in battery performance.

[0009]

For the purpose of further improving the properties of the LiCoO_2 described above, a technique in which cobalt sites in the crystal structure of the LiCoO_2 are displaced by the element of Zn, Cu, Si, Mg, P, Be, Ca, Sr, Ba, or Ra is reported in Japanese Patent No. 3,162,437 and a technique in which the sites are displaced by aluminum element is reported in JP-A-11-7958 and JP-A-11-73958. However, there has been a problem that since these displacing elements undergo no electrode reaction at around 4 V, the presence of these displacing elements in the active material reduces the discharge capacity. Especially when aluminum element is contained in the active material, there has been a problem that the presence thereof lowers the bulk density of the active material and hence reduces the energy density of the battery.

[0010]

There has further been a problem that when the LiCoO_2 is charged at a high temperature, lithium ions tend to be excessively extracted. When excessive extraction of lithium ions occurs during charge, the negative-electrode

side functions to incorporate the excess lithium thereinto. That part of the lithium which remains undoped during this charge is thought to deposit as lithium metal on the negative electrode. The lithium metal which has thus deposited hardly redissolves to become utilizable as an active material. Because of this, not only the battery capacity decreases, but also there has been a possibility that the lithium deposited might penetrate the separator to cause internal short-circuiting.

[0011]

An object of the invention, which has been achieved in view of the problems described above, is to provide a positive active material which can give a battery having a high energy density and excellent high-rate discharge performance and inhibited from decreasing in battery performance even in the case of high-temperature charge, and to provide a non-aqueous electrolyte battery employing the positive active material.

[0012]

[Means for Solving the Problems]

As a result of intensive investigations made by the present inventors in order to overcome the problems described above, it has been found that a lithium secondary battery which has a high energy density and is excellent in high-rate discharge performance and high-

temperature charge performance is obtained by using a composite oxide having a specific composition as a positive active material. The invention has been thus achieved. Namely, the technical constitutions of the invention and the effects and advantages thereof are as follows. It is, however, noted that the explanations on the mechanisms of the effects include presumptions and whether these explanations are correct or not does not limit the scope of the invention.

[0013]

The invention provides a positive active material comprising a composite oxide which is constituted of at least lithium (Li), manganese (Mn), nickel (Ni), cobalt (Co), and oxygen (O) and is represented by the following chemical composition formula:

$\text{Li}_a\text{Mn}_b\text{Ni}_c\text{Co}_d\text{O}_e$ (Chemical composition formula 1)

(wherein $0 < a < 1.3$

$|b - c| < 0.03$

$0.8 \leq d < 1$

$1.7 \leq e \leq 2.3$

$b + c + d = 1$).

[0014]

The present invention provides a non-aqueous electrolyte battery having a positive electrode containing the positive active material, a negative electrode, and a

non-aqueous electrolyte.

[0015]

According to the constitutions described above, a positive active material for lithium secondary batteries excellent in high-rate discharge performance and high-temperature charge performance, and a non-aqueous electrolyte battery can be provided.

[0016]

Namely, the present inventors made intensive investigations on the displacement of part of the cobalt in an LiCoO_2 crystal structure by elements other than cobalt for the purpose of improving various properties of the LiCoO_2 heretofore in use among positive active materials. As a result, it has been utterly surprisingly found that when the cobalt occupying the 6b sites in an α - NaFeO_2 structure is displaced by manganese and nickel elements in an amount determined by a specific composition, then the resultant composite oxide has greatly improved high-rate discharge performance and is inhibited from undergoing excessive lithium ion extraction in high-temperature charge as compared with the LiCoO_2 which has not undergone the displacement.

[0017]

Although the mechanism by which such an effect is produced is not entirely clear, the following hypotheses

are possible. There is a possibility that the manganese and nickel elements might exert some influence on the whole LiCoO_2 crystal structure to accelerate lithium diffusion. There also is a possibility that the manganese and nickel elements might stabilize the whole LiCoO_2 crystal structure. Furthermore, there is a possibility that the manganese and nickel elements might exert some action locally on the surface of the LiCoO_2 crystals. Moreover, there is a possibility that the manganese and nickel elements might exert some influence on solid-phase reactions between lithium and cobalt which take place in a sintering step in active-material synthesis to thereby produce an optimal particle form. These hypotheses have not been investigated so far. However, even a small displacing-element amount results in remarkable improvements in battery performance and the advantages of the invention are surprising in this point.

[0018]

For obtaining the advantages of the invention in a preferred manner, the constitutional ratio between manganese and nickel is a crucially important matter. Namely, the Mn/Ni element ratio in the invention is regulated so that the value of $|b-c|$ (absolute value of the difference between the value of b and the value of c) is 0.05 or smaller, preferably smaller than 0.03, whereby

advantages of the invention are produced remarkably.

Namely, a positive active material having high high-rate discharge performance and a high discharge capacity is obtained.

[0019]

The proportions of manganese and nickel elements in the 6b sites also are important. Namely, the sum of manganese and nickel in the (chemical composition formula 1) (hereinafter referred to also as Mn+Ni amount), i.e., the value of $b+c$, is regulated to a positive number of 0.2 or smaller whereby advantages of the invention are produced remarkably. An Mn+Ni amount of 0 is undesirable because this results in reduced high-rate discharge performance and in an increase in the amount of lithium ions excessively extracted during high-temperature charge. Furthermore, Mn+Ni amounts exceeding 0.4 are undesirable because the excessive extraction of lithium ions during high-temperature charge cannot be inhibited in this case also. It is therefore necessary to satisfy $b+c+d=1$ and $0.8 \leq d < 1$ for attaining high high-rate discharge performance and inhibiting a high-temperature charge capacity from increasing. The lower limit of the value of d is more preferably 0.83 or larger, most preferably 0.90 or larger. The upper limit of the value of d is more preferably 0.99 or smaller, most preferably 0.95 or smaller.

[0020]

Moreover, in the (chemical composition formula 1), the value of a, which indicates the amount of lithium, is a positive number of 1.3 or smaller. As long as the value of a is within this range, performances of the invention are produced. Values of a larger than 1.3 are undesirable because the excess lithium forms lithium compounds, e.g., the carbonate, on the surface of the active material and this exerts adverse influences not only during electrode production but also on battery characteristics, in particular, charge/discharge cycle characteristics.

[0021]

[Mode for Carrying Out the Invention]

Examples of the mode of the present invention will be described below, however, the invention is not limited to the descriptions.

[0022]

In synthesizing the positive active materials of the invention, production processes are not particularly limited as long as the 6a sites in an α -NaFeO₂ structure are occupied by lithium, the 6b sites therein are occupied by cobalt, manganese, and nickel, and the 6c sites therein are occupied by oxygen each in a proper amount. Practically, the positive active materials can be advantageously produced by griding/mixing a lithium

compound, manganese compound, nickel compound, and cobalt compound and subjecting the mixture to a method for thermal decomposition/mixing, a method for precipitation reaction, or a method for hydrolysis. Of these, the method in which a composite precipitation compound of manganese, nickel, and cobalt (hereinafter referred to also as "Mn-Ni-Co mixture precursor") and a lithium compound are used as raw materials and are mixed/heat-treated is preferred from the standpoint of producing a homogeneous composite oxide.

[0023]

The Mn-Ni-Co mixture precursor to be produced preferably is a compound in which the manganese, nickel, and cobalt have been evenly mixed together. Any production process satisfying this requirement may be used without particular limitations. However, since the crystal structure is required to be highly stable to lithium extraction/insertion in the element constitution ranges according to the invention, use may be made of "a coprecipitation process in which an acidic aqueous solution of manganese, nickel, and cobalt is precipitated with an aqueous alkali solution, e.g., an aqueous sodium hydroxide solution". By this method, a positive active material showing especially high battery performances can be produced. In this method, it is preferred to generate

crystal growth nuclei under such conditions that the amount of ammonium ions in the reaction system is in excess of the amount of ions of these metals, i.e., manganese, nickel, and cobalt, because precursor particles which are exceedingly homogeneous and highly bulky can be produced. The absence of ammonium ions is undesirable because ions of those metals rapidly precipitate through acid-base reactions and this results in random crystal orientation to form a precipitate having a low bulk density. When ammonium ions are present, the rate of the precipitation reactions is reduced because precipitation occurs via metal-ammine complex formation reactions and, hence, a highly bulky precipitate of primary-particle crystals having satisfactory crystal orientation can be produced. The presence of ammonium ions is therefore preferred. It is also possible to regulate properties of the coprecipitation compound, such as particle shape, bulk density, and surface area, by selecting apparatus factors such as reactor shape and the kind of stirring blades and various factors including the period of precipitate residence in a reaction vessel, reaction vessel temperature, total ion amount, liquid pH, ammonia ion concentration, and concentration of an oxidation number regulator.

[0024]

Examples of raw materials for the Mn-Ni-Co mixture precursor are as follows. Examples of manganese compounds include manganese oxide, manganese carbonate, manganese sulfate, manganese nitrate, and the like. Examples of nickel compounds include nickel hydroxide, nickel carbonate, nickel sulfate, nickel nitrate, and the like. Examples of cobalt compounds include cobalt sulfate, cobalt nitrate, and the like. Examples of ammonium sources include ammonium sulfate, aqueous ammonia, and the like.

[0025]

The raw materials to be used for producing the Mn-Ni-Co mixture precursor may be in any form as long as they undergo a precipitation reaction with an aqueous alkali solution. However, it is preferred to use metal salts having high solubility. In this case, although manganese can have two or more oxidation numbers, it is preferred that manganese be incorporated in a bivalent state into crystals in precipitate formation. In case where manganese is oxidized in precipitate formation, water is apt to be incorporated into the crystals and this results in a possibility that an impurity phase might generate in a sintering step. Although examples of the impurity phase include Li_2MnO_3 , this Li_2MnO_3 as an active material is electrically inactive at around 4 V and is causative of a

decrease in capacity. For overcoming this problem, use is made of a method in which a reducing agent such as hydrazine is introduced into the reaction solution or the atmosphere in the reaction vessel is filled with inert gas to remove oxygen. Known production processes employing this technique are described in JP-A-11-317224, JP-A-2000-3706, JP-A-11-312519, and JP-A-11-307093. Incidentally, when a precipitate is formed in the presence of a hydroxide, the main precipitation products are in the form of hydroxide. However, there are cases where compounds of, e.g., manganese become an oxide form in the step of drying the precipitated precursor.

[0026]

The Mn-Ni-Co mixture precursor may be produced by coating a cobalt compound with manganese and nickel compounds. Namely, a solution containing manganese and nickel is dropped into a suspension of a cobalt compound to thereby evenly deposit an Mn-Ni precipitate. The cobalt compound is not particularly limited as long as it has a low solubility. It is, however, preferred to use cobalt(II) oxide, cobalt(III) hydroxide oxide, dicobalt(III) monocobalt(II) tetroxide, cobalt(II) hydroxide, or the like. As stated above, it is necessary to fill the inside of the reaction system with a reducing atmosphere because manganese is used. The presence of

ammonium ions is necessary for evenly growing crystals on the cobalt compound. Under some conditions, however, ammonium ions need not be present because a cobalt compound is already present.

[0027]

The lithium composite oxide in the invention can be advantageously produced by mixing the Mn-Ni-Co mixture precursor with a lithium compound and then heat-treating the mixture. As the lithium compound may be used lithium hydroxide or lithium carbonate. Thus, the composite oxide can be advantageously produced.

[0028]

The heat treatment may be conducted in an oxygen atmosphere at a temperature in the range of 700°C or higher and 900°C or lower whereby the target oxide can be advantageously produced. Temperatures for the heat treatment lower than 700°C are undesirable because solid-phase reactions do not proceed. Heat treatment temperatures higher than 900°C are undesirable because solid-phase reactions proceed excessively and, as a result, sintering proceeds exceedingly. Consequently, as long as the heat treatment temperature is in the range of preferably from 700 to 900°C, more preferably from 750 to 800°C, high properties can be exhibited.

[0029]

The non-aqueous electrolyte batteries (hereinafter also referred to simply as "batteries") according to the invention have a positive electrode containing a positive active material of the invention, a negative electrode, and a non-aqueous electrolyte. In general, a separator is disposed between the positive electrode and the negative electrode.

[0030]

As the non-aqueous electrolyte can be employed ones use of which for lithium batteries and the like has been proposed. Examples of non-aqueous solvents for use in the non-aqueous electrolyte include any one of or a mixture of two or more of: cyclic carbonic esters such as propylene carbonate, ethylene carbonate, butylene carbonate, chloroethylene carbonate, and vinylene carbonate; cyclic esters such as γ -butyrolactone and γ -valerolactone; chain carbonates such as dimethyl carbonate, diethyl carbonate, and ethyl methyl carbonate; chain esters such as methyl formate, methyl acetate, and methyl butyrate; tetrahydrofuran or derivatives thereof; ethers such as 1,3-dioxane, 1,4-dioxane, 1,2-dimethoxyethane, 1,4-dibutoxyethane, and methyldiglyme; nitriles such as acetonitrile and benzonitrile; dioxolane or derivatives thereof; ethylene sulfide, sulfolane, and sultones or derivatives thereof; and the like. However, the solvents

should not be construed as being limited to these examples.

[0031]

Examples of electrolyte salts for use in the non-aqueous electrolyte include inorganic ionic salts containing one of lithium (Li), sodium (Na), and potassium (K), such as LiClO_4 , LiBF_4 , LiAsF_6 , LiPF_6 , LiSCN , LiBr , LiI , Li_2SO_4 , $\text{Li}_2\text{B}_{10}\text{Cl}_{10}$, NaClO_4 , NaI , NaSCN , NaBr , KClO_4 , and KSCN ; organic ionic salts such as LiCF_3SO_3 , $\text{LiN}(\text{CF}_3\text{SO}_2)_2$, $\text{LiN}(\text{C}_2\text{F}_5\text{SO}_2)_2$, $\text{LiN}(\text{CF}_3\text{SO}_2)(\text{C}_4\text{F}_9\text{SO}_2)$, $\text{LiC}(\text{CF}_3\text{SO}_2)_3$, $\text{LiC}(\text{C}_2\text{F}_5\text{SO}_2)_3$, $(\text{CH}_3)_4\text{NBF}_4$, $(\text{CH}_3)_4\text{NBr}$, $(\text{C}_2\text{H}_5)_4\text{NClO}_4$, $(\text{C}_2\text{H}_5)_4\text{NI}$, $(\text{C}_3\text{H}_7)_4\text{NBr}$, $(n\text{-C}_4\text{H}_9)_4\text{NClO}_4$, $(n\text{-C}_4\text{H}_9)_4\text{NI}$, $(\text{C}_2\text{H}_5)_4\text{N-maleate}$, $(\text{C}_2\text{H}_5)_4\text{N-benzoate}$, $(\text{C}_2\text{H}_5)_4\text{N-phthalate}$, lithium stearylsulfonate, lithium octylsulfonate, and lithium dodecylbenzenesulfonate; and the like. These ionic compounds can be used alone or as a mixture of two or more thereof.

[0032]

Furthermore, use of a mixture of LiBF_4 and a lithium salt having a perfluoroalkyl group, such as $\text{LiN}(\text{C}_2\text{F}_5\text{SO}_2)_2$, is more desirable because the electrolyte viscosity can be further reduced and, hence, low-temperature characteristics can be further enhanced.

[0033]

The concentration of the electrolyte salt in the non-aqueous electrolyte is preferably from 0.1 mol/l to 5

mol/l, more preferably from 0.5 mol/l to 2.5 mol/l, from the standpoint of obtaining a non-aqueous electrolyte battery having high battery characteristics without fail.

[0034]

In the lithium secondary battery of the present invention, it is preferred to employ an electrode constituted by a lithium-containing transition metal oxide as a positive electrode, and an electrode constituted by graphite as a negative electrode.

[0035]

As the positive active material as a main constituent component of the positive electrode, either of above-described composite metal oxides according to the invention may be used in combination with any one of lithium-containing phosphoric acid salts, lithium-containing sulfuric acid salts, and the like or with a mixture of two or more of these. Examples of the lithium-containing transition metal oxides include ones represented by the chemical composition formula Li_xMX_2 or $\text{Li}_x\text{MN}_y\text{X}_2$ (wherein M and N represent a metal in Groups I to VIII, and X represents a chalcogen compound such as oxygen or sulfur), such as, e.g., $\text{Li}_y\text{Co}_{1-x}\text{M}_x\text{O}_2$ and $\text{Li}_y\text{Mn}_{2-x}\text{M}_x\text{O}_4$.

[Examples of M include metals in Groups I to VIII (e.g., one or more elements selected from Li, Ca, Cr, Ni, Fe, and Co). In the lithium-containing transition metal oxides,

the value of x , which indicates the displacement amount of the element of a different kind, may be any value up to one corresponding to the maximum displacement possible. Although such values are effective, x is preferably in the range of $0 \leq x \leq 1$ from the standpoint of discharge capacity. With respect to the value of y , which indicates lithium amount, the maximum amount in which lithium can be reversibly utilized is effective. However, y is preferably in the range of $0 \leq y \leq 2$ from the standpoint of discharge capacity.] However, the transition metal oxides should not be construed as being limited to these examples.

[0036]

Furthermore, a mixture with other positive active materials may be used for the lithium-containing compound. Examples of other positive active materials include compounds of a Group I metal, such as CuO , Cu_2O , Ag_2O , CuS , and CuSO_4 , compounds of a Group IV metal, such as TiS_2 , SiO_2 , and SnO , compounds of a Group V metal, such as V_2O_5 , V_6O_{12} , VO_x , Nb_2O_5 , Bi_2O_3 , and Sb_2O_3 , compounds of a Group VI metal, such as CrO_3 , Cr_2O_3 , MoO_3 , MoS_2 , WO_3 , and SeO_2 , compounds of a Group VII metal, such as MnO_2 and Mn_2O_3 , compounds of a Group VIII metal, such as Fe_2O_3 , FeO , Fe_3O_4 , Ni_2O_3 , NiO , CoO_3 , and CoO , metal compounds such as, e.g., lithium-cobalt composite oxides and lithium-manganese composite oxides, conductive polymeric compounds such as

disulfides, polypyrrole, polyaniline, poly-p-phenylene, polyacetylene, and polyacene materials, carbonaceous materials of the pseudo-graphite structure, and the like. However, the optionally usable positive active materials should not be construed as being limited to these examples.

[0037]

The positive electrode is produced by kneading the lithium-containing transition metal oxide with a conductive material and a binder, and further a filler according to needed to prepare a positive electrode composite, and then applying or press-bonding the resultant positive electrode composite to a foil of a lath plate or the like as a current collector followed by heat-treatment at a temperature of about from 50°C to 250°C for about 2 hours.

[0038]

As a negative-electrode material may be selected any one which is in a form able to deposit or dope lithium ions. Examples thereof include lithium metal, lithium alloys (lithium metal-containing alloys such as lithium-aluminum, lithium-lead, lithium-tin, lithium-aluminum-tin, lithium-gallium, and Wood's metal), lithium composite oxides (lithium-titanium), and silicon oxide, and further include carbonaceous materials (e.g., graphites, hard carbon, low-temperature-sintered carbon, and amorphous

carbon). Of these, graphites have an operating potential very close to that of metallic lithium and can realize charge/discharge at a high operating voltage. Furthermore, when a lithium salt is employed as an electrolyte salt, graphites are effective in diminishing self-discharge and in reducing the irreversible capacity in charge/discharge. Graphites are hence preferred negative-electrode materials. For example, artificial graphite and natural graphite are preferred. In particular, graphite negative-electrode material particles whose surface has been modified with, e.g., amorphous carbon are desirable because gas generation therefrom during charge is little.

[0039]

Results of examinations by X-ray diffractometry, etc. of graphites which can be advantageously used are shown below.

Lattice spacing (d_{002}): 0.333-0.350 nm

Crystallite size in a-axis direction, L_a : ≥ 20 nm

Crystallite size in c-axis direction, L_c : ≥ 20 nm

True density: 2.00-2.25 g/cm³

[0040]

It is also possible to modify a graphite by adding thereto a metal oxide, e.g., tin oxide or silicon oxide, phosphorus, boron, amorphous carbon, or the like. In particular, modifying the surface of a graphite by the

method described above is desirable because this modification can inhibit electrolyte decomposition and thereby heighten battery characteristics. Furthermore, a combination of a graphite and either lithium metal or a lithium metal-containing alloy, such as lithium-aluminum, lithium-lead, lithium-tin, lithium-aluminum-tin, lithium-gallium, or Wood's metal, or the like can be used as a negative-electrode material. A graphite into which lithium has been inserted beforehand by electrochemical reduction can also be used as a negative-electrode material.

[0041]

A grinder and a classifier are used for obtaining an active material powder having a given shape. For example, use is made of a mortar, ball mill, sand mill, oscillating ball mill, planetary ball mill, jet mill, counter jet mill, or cyclone type jet mill and sieves or the like. Grinding may be conducted by wet grinding in which water or an organic solvent, e.g., hexane, coexists. Methods of classification are not particularly limited, and sieves, an air classifier, or the like is used in each of dry and wet processes according to need.

[0042]

Although the positive active material and negative-electrode material which are major constituent components

of the positive electrode and negative electrode were described above in detail, the positive electrode and negative electrode may contain a conductive material, binder, thickener, filler, and the like as other components besides the major constituent components.

[0043]

The conductive material is not limited as long as it is an electron-conductive material not adversely influencing battery performance. Usually, however, conductive materials such as natural graphite (e.g., flake graphite, flaky graphite, or soil-like graphite), artificial graphite, carbon black, acetylene black, Ketjen Black, carbon whiskers, carbon fibers, metal (e.g., copper, nickel, aluminum, silver, or gold) powders, metal fibers, and conductive ceramic materials can be incorporated alone or as a mixture thereof.

[0044]

A preferred conductive material of these is acetylene black from the standpoints of electron-conductive properties and applicability. The amount of the conductive material to be added is preferably from 0.1% by weight to 50% by weight, especially preferably from 0.5% by weight to 30% by weight, based on the total weight of the positive electrode or negative electrode. It is especially desirable to use acetylene black which

has been ground to ultrafine particles of from 0.1 to 0.5 μm , because use thereof is effective in reducing the amount of carbon required. For mixing those ingredients, physical mixing is conducted. Homogeneous mixing is ideal. For this mixing, a powder mixer such as a V-type mixer, S-type mixer, mortar mill, ball mill, or planetary mill can be used in a dry or wet mixing process.

[0045]

As the binder can usually be used one of or a mixture of two or more of thermoplastic resins such as polytetrafluoroethylene (PTFE), poly(vinylidene fluoride) (PVDF), polyethylene, and polypropylene and polymers having rubber elasticity, such as ethylene/propylene/diene terpolymers (EPDM), sulfonated EPDM, styrene/butadiene rubbers (SBR), and fluororubbers. The amount of the binder to be added is preferably from 1 to 50% by weight, especially preferably from 2 to 30% by weight, based on the total weight of the positive electrode or negative electrode.

[0046]

As the thickener can usually be used one of or a mixture of two or more of polysaccharides such as carboxymethyl cellulose and methyl cellulose and the like. In the case of thickeners having functional groups reactive with lithium, such as polysaccharides, it is

desired to deactivate the functional groups beforehand by, e.g., methylation. The amount of the thickener to be added is preferably from 0.5 to 10% by weight, especially preferably from 1 to 2% by weight, based on the total weight of the positive electrode or negative electrode.

[0047]

As the filler may be used any material which does not adversely influence battery performance. Usually, use is made of an olefin polymer such as polypropylene or polyethylene, amorphous silica, alumina, zeolite, glass, carbon, etc. The amount of the filler to be added is preferably up to 30% by weight based on the total weight of the positive electrode or negative electrode.

[0048]

The positive electrode and negative electrode are produced preferably by mixing the active material, the conductive material and the binder with an organic solvent, e.g., N-methylpyrrolidone or toluene, subsequently applying the resultant liquid mixture to the current collector followed by drying. In the application, it is desired to apply the liquid mixture, for example, by roller coating using an applicator roll, screen coating, doctor blade coating, spin coating, or coating with a bar coater or the like in any desired thickness and any desired shape. However, methods of application should not

be construed as being limited to these.

[0048]

As the current collector may be used any electron conductor which does not exert an adverse influence in the battery fabricated. For example, the current collector for the positive electrode can be aluminum, titanium, stainless steel, nickel, sintered carbon, a conductive polymer, conductive glass, or the like. Besides these, use can be made, as the positive-electrode current collector, of a material obtained by treating the surface of aluminum, copper, or the like with carbon, nickel, titanium, silver, or the like for the purpose of improving adhesiveness, conductivity, and oxidation resistance. The current collector for the negative electrode can be copper, nickel, iron, stainless steel, titanium, aluminum, sintered carbon, a conductive polymer, conductive glass, Al-Cd alloy, or the like. Besides these, use can be made, as the negative-electrode current collector, of a material obtained by treating the surface of copper or the like with carbon, nickel, titanium, silver, or the like for the purpose of improving adhesiveness, conductivity, and reduction resistance. These materials can be subjected to a surface oxidation treatment.

[0050]

With respect to the shape of the current collector,

use is made of a foil form or a film, sheet, net, punched or expanded, lath, porous, or foamed form. A structure made up of fibers is also usable. Although the thickness thereof is not particularly limited, collectors having a thickness of from 1 to 500 μm are used. Of these current collectors, a preferred collector for the positive electrode is an aluminum foil, which has excellent oxidation resistance. Preferred current collectors for the negative electrode are a copper foil, nickel foil, and iron foil, which are excellent in reduction resistance and electrical conductivity and are inexpensive, and an alloy foil containing part of these. Furthermore, these foils preferably are ones in which the rough-surface side has a surface roughness R_a of 0.2 μm or more. This surface roughness enables the current collector to be in highly close contact with the positive active material or negative-electrode material. It is therefore preferred to use an electrolytic foil, which has such a rough surface. Most preferred is an electrolytic foil which has undergone a "hana" surface treatment. Furthermore, in the case where these foils are to be coated on both sides, it is desirable that the both sides have the same or almost the same surface roughness.

[0051]

The separator for non-aqueous electrolyte batteries

preferably is one of or a combination of two or more of porous films, nonwoven fabrics, and the like which show excellent rate characteristics. Examples of the material constituting the separator for non-aqueous electrolyte batteries include polyolefin resins represented by polyethylene and polypropylene, polyester resins represented by poly(ethylene terephthalate) and poly(butylene terephthalate), poly(vinylidene fluoride), vinylidene fluoride/hexafluoropropylene copolymers, vinylidene fluoride/perfluorovinyl ether copolymers, vinylidene fluoride/tetrafluoroethylene copolymers, vinylidene fluoride/trifluoroethylene copolymers, vinylidene fluoride/fluoroethylene copolymers, vinylidene fluoride/hexafluoroacetone copolymers, vinylidene fluoride/ethylene copolymers, vinylidene fluoride/propylene copolymers, vinylidene fluoride/trifluoropropylene copolymers, vinylidene fluoride/tetrafluoroethylene/-hexafluoropropylene copolymers, and vinylidene fluoride/ethylene/tetrafluoroethylene copolymers.

[0052]

The porosity of the separator for non-aqueous electrolyte batteries is preferably 98% by volume or lower from the standpoint of strength. The porosity thereof is preferably 20% by volume or higher from the standpoint of

charge/discharge characteristics.

[0053]

As the separator for non-aqueous electrolyte batteries may be used a polymer gel constituted of a polymer of, e.g., acrylonitrile, ethylene oxide, propylene oxide, methyl methacrylate, vinyl acetate, vinylpyrrolidone, poly(vinylidene fluoride), or the like and an electrolyte.

[0054]

Use of a non-aqueous electrolyte in such a gel form in the invention is preferred in that it has the liquid electrolyte leakage preventive effect.

[0055]

Furthermore, a separator for non-aqueous electrolyte batteries which comprises a combination of a porous film, nonwoven fabric, or the like such as that described above and a polymer gel is desirable because use of this separator improves electrolyte retention. Namely, the surface of a microporous polyethylene film and the walls of the micropores are coated in a thickness of up to several micrometers with a polymer having affinity for solvents and an electrolyte is caused to held in the micropores of the coated film, whereby the polymer having affinity for solvents gels.

[0056]

Examples of the polymer having affinity for solvents include poly(vinylidene fluoride) and polymers formed by the crosslinking of an acrylate monomer having an ethylene oxide group or ester group, epoxy monomer, monomer having isocyanate groups, or the like. These monomers can be crosslinked with heating or ultraviolet (UV) in the presence of a free-radical initiator or crosslinked with actinic rays, such as electron beams (EB), or the like.

[0057]

For the purpose of regulating strength or properties, a property regulator can be incorporated into the polymer having affinity for solvents in such an amount as not to inhibit the formation of a crosslinked structure. Examples of the property regulator include inorganic fillers {metal oxides such as silicon oxide, titanium oxide, aluminum oxide, magnesium oxide, zirconium oxide, zinc oxide, and iron oxide and metal carbonates such as calcium carbonate and magnesium carbonate} and polymers {poly(vinylidene fluoride), vinylidene fluoride/hexafluoro-propylene copolymers, polyacrylonitrile, poly(methyl methacrylate), and the like}. The amount of the property regulator to be added is generally up to 50% by weight, preferably up to 20% by weight, based on the crosslinkable monomer.

[0058]

Examples of the acrylate monomer include unsaturated monomers having a functionality of 2 or higher. Specific examples thereof include difunctional (meth)acrylates {ethylene glycol di(meth)acrylate, propylene glycol di(meth)acrylate, adipic acid dineopentyl glycol ester di(meth)acrylate, polyethylene glycol di(meth)acrylates having a degree of polymerization of 2 or higher, polypropylene glycol di(meth)acrylates having a degree of polymerization of 2 or higher, polyoxyethylene/polyoxypropylene copolymer di(meth)acrylates, butanediol di(meth)acrylate, hexamethylene glycol di(meth)acrylate, and the like}, trifunctional (meth)acrylates {trimethylolpropane tri(meth)acrylate, glycerol tri(meth)acrylate, tri(meth)acrylates of ethylene oxide adducts of glycerol, tri(meth)acrylates of propylene oxide adducts of glycerol, tri(meth)acrylates of ethylene oxide/propylene oxide adducts of glycerol, and the like}, and (meth)acrylates having a functionality of 4 or higher {pentaerythritol tetra(meth)acrylate, diglycerol hexa(meth)acrylate, and the like}. These monomers can be used alone or in combination.

[0059]

A monofunctional monomer may be added to the acrylate monomer for the purpose of property regulation, etc. Examples of the monofunctional monomer include

unsaturated carboxylic acids {acrylic acid, methacrylic acid, crotonic acid, cinnamic acid, vinylbenzoic acid, maleic acid, fumaric acid, itaconic acid, citraconic acid, mesaconic acid, methylmalonic acid, aconitic acid, and the like}; unsaturated sulfonic acids {styrenesulfonic acid, acrylamido-2-methylpropanesulfonic acid, and the like} or salts of these (lithium salts, sodium salts, potassium salts, ammonium salts, tetraalkylammonium salts, and the like); those unsaturated carboxylic acids partly esterified with a C1-C18 aliphatic or alicyclic alcohol, alkylene (C2-C4) glycol, polyalkylene (C2-C4) glycol, or the like (methyl maleate, monohydroxyethyl maleate, and the like) or partly amidated with ammonia or a primary or secondary amine (maleic acid monoamide, N-methylmaleic acid monoamide, N,N-diethylmaleic acid monoamide, and the like); (meth)acrylic esters [esters of (meth)acrylic acid with a C1-C18 aliphatic (e.g., methyl, ethyl, propyl, butyl, 2-ethylhexyl, or stearyl) alcohol; and esters of (meth)acrylic acid with an alkylene (C2-C4) glycol (ethylene glycol, propylene glycol, 1,4-butanediol, or the like) or with a polyalkylene (C2-C4) glycol (polyethylene glycol or polypropylene glycol)]; (meth)acrylamide or N-substituted (meth)acrylamides [(meth)acrylamide, N-methyl(meth)acrylamide, N-methylol(meth)acrylamide, and the like]; vinyl esters or allyl esters [vinyl acetate,

allyl acetate, and the like]; vinyl ethers or allyl ethers [butyl vinyl ether, dodecyl allyl ether, and the like]; unsaturated nitrile compounds [(meth)acrylonitrile, crotononitrile, and the like]; unsaturated alcohols [(meth)allyl alcohol and the like]; unsaturated amines [(meth)allylamine, dimethylaminoethyl (meth)acrylate, diethylaminoethyl (meth)acrylate, and the like]; heterocycle-containing monomers [N-vinylpyrrolidone, vinylpyridine, and the like]; olefinic aliphatic hydrocarbons [ethylene, propylene, butylene, isobutylene, pentene, (C6-C50) α -olefins, and the like]; olefinic alicyclic hydrocarbons [cyclopentene, cyclohexene, cycloheptene, norbornene, and the like]; olefinic aromatic hydrocarbons [styrene, α -methylstyrene, stilbene, and the like]; unsaturated imides [maleimide and the like]; and halogen-containing monomers [vinyl chloride, vinylidene chloride, vinylidene fluoride, hexafluoropropylene, and the like].

[0060]

Examples of the epoxy monomer include glycidyl ethers {bisphenol A diglycidyl ether, bisphenol F diglycidyl ether, brominated bisphenol A diglycidyl ether, phenol-novolac glycidyl ether, cresol-novolac glycidyl ether, and the like}, glycidyl esters {hexahydrophthalic acid glycidyl ester, dimer acid glycidyl esters, and the

like}, glycidylamines {triglycidyl isocyanurate, tetraglycidyl diaminophenylmethane, and the like}, linear aliphatic epoxides {epoxidized polybutadiene, epoxidized soybean oil, and the like}, and alicyclic epoxides {3,4-epoxy-6-methylcyclohexylmethylcarboxylate, 3,4-epoxycyclohexylmethylcarboxylate, and the like}. These epoxy resins can be used alone or after having been cured by addition of a hardener thereto.

[0061]

Examples of the hardener include aliphatic polyamines {diethylenetriamine, triethylenetetramine, 3,9-(3-aminopropyl)-2,4,8,10-tetraoxaspiro[5,5]undecane, and the like}, aromatic polyamines {m-xylenediamine, diaminophenylmethane, and the like}, polyamides {dimer acid polyamides and the like}, acid anhydrides {phthalic anhydride, tetrahydromethylphthalic anhydride, hexahydrophthalic anhydride, trimellitic anhydride, and methyl nadic anhydride}, phenol compounds {phenolic novolacs and the like}, polymercaptans {polysulfides and the like}, tertiary amines {tris(dimethylaminomethyl)phenol, 2-ethyl-4-methylimidazole, and the like}, and Lewis acid complexes {boron trifluoride/ethylamine complex and the like}.

[0062]

Examples of the monomer having isocyanate groups

include toluene diisocyanate, diphenylmethane diisocyanate, 1,6-hexamethylene diisocyanate, 2,2,4(2,2,4)-trimethylhexamethylene diisocyanate, p-phenylene diisocyanate, 4,4'-dicyclohexylmethane diisocyanate, 3,3'-dimethyldiphenyl 4,4'-diisocyanate, dianisidine diisocyanate, m-xylene diisocyanate, trimethylxylene diisocyanate, isophorone diisocyanate, 1,5-naphthalene diisocyanate, trans-1,4-cyclohexyl diisocyanate, and lysine diisocyanate.

[0063]

In crosslinking the monomer having isocyanate groups, a compound having active hydrogen may also be used. Examples of this compound include polyols and polyamines [difunctional compounds {water, ethylene glycol, propylene glycol, diethylene glycol, dipropylene glycol, and the like}, trifunctional compounds {glycerol, trimethylolpropane, 1,2,6-hexanetriol, triethanolamine, and the like}, tetrafunctional compounds {pentaerythritol, ethylenediamine, tolylenediamine, diphenylmethanediamine, tetramethylol-cyclohexane, methylglucosides, and the like}, pentafunctional compounds {2,2,6,6-tetrakis-(hydroxymethyl)cyclohexanol, diethylenetriamine, and the like}, hexafunctional compounds {sorbitol, mannitol, dulcitol, and the like}, and octafunctional compounds {sucrose and the like}], polyether polyols {propylene

oxide and/or ethylene oxide adducts of the polyols or polyamines mentioned above}, and polyester polyols [condensates of the aforementioned polyols with a polybasic acid {adipic acid, o-, m-, or p-phthalic acid, succinic acid, azelaic acid, sebacic acid, or ricinoleic acid}, polycaprolactone polyols {poly-ε-caprolactone and the like}, polycondensates of hydroxycarboxylic acids, and the like].

[0064]

A catalyst may also be used in conducting the crosslinking reaction. Examples of the catalyst include organotin compounds, trialkylphosphines, amines [monoamines {N,N-dimethylcyclohexylamine, triethylamine, and the like}, cyclic monoamines {pyridine, N-methylmorpholine, and the like}, diamines {N,N,N',N'-tetramethylethylenediamine, N,N,N',N'-tetramethyl-1,3-butanediamine, and the like}, triamines {N,N,N',N'-pentamethyldiethylenetriamine and the like}, hexamines {N,N,N',N'-tetra(3-dimethylaminopropyl)-methanedi-amine and the like}, cyclic polyamines {diazabicyclooctane (DABCO), N,N'-dimethylpiperazine, 1,2-dimethylimidazole, 1,8-diazabicyclo(5,4,0)undecene-7 (DBU), and the like}, and salts of these.

[0065]

A non-aqueous electrolyte battery according to the

invention is produced preferably by a method which comprises superposing a separator for non-aqueous electrolyte batteries, a positive electrode, and a negative electrode, infiltrating an electrolyte thereinto, for example, before or after the superposition, and finally sealing the case with a facing body. In the case of a non-aqueous electrolyte battery employing a wound power generating element comprising a positive electrode and a negative electrode which have been stacked on each other through a separator for non-aqueous electrolyte batteries, it is preferred that an electrolyte be infiltrated into the power generating element before and after the winding. Although the infiltration may be conducted at ordinary pressure, the vacuum impregnation method or the pressure impregnation method can be used.

[0066]

Examples of the material of the facing body of the lithium secondary battery include nickel-plated iron, stainless steel, aluminum, and metal/resin laminate films. For example, a metal/resin laminate film having a constitution comprising resin films and a metal foil sandwiched therebetween is preferred. Examples of the metal foil are not particularly limited as long as they are foils of aluminum, iron, nickel, copper, stainless steel, titanium, gold, silver, or the like which are free

from pinholes. However, aluminum foils are preferred because they are lightweight and inexpensive. Preferred for use as the resin film to be disposed on the outer side in the battery is a resin film having excellent piercing strength, such as a poly(ethylene terephthalate) film or nylon film. Preferred as the resin film to be disposed on the inner side in the battery is a film which is fusion-bondable and has solvent resistance, such as a polyethylene film or nylon film.

[0067]

The constitution of the lithium secondary battery is not particularly limited. Examples thereof include a coin battery and button battery which each have a positive electrode, negative electrode, and separator of a single-layer or multilayer structure, and further include a cylindrical battery, prismatic battery, and flat type battery which each have a positive electrode, negative electrode, and roll-form separator.

[0068]

[Example]

(Example 1) Mn-Ni Coating Technique

Into a closed type reaction vessel having a capacity of 1 l were introduced 500 ml of water, 25% aqueous ammonia (1 g), and 100 g of cobalt hydroxide. The pH of the resultant solution was adjusted to 11.0 ± 0.1 with 3%

aqueous sodium hydroxide solution. The temperature of the solution in the reaction vessel was kept at 50°C with an external heater. Argon gas having a purity of 99.9% was bubbled into the reaction solution to remove dissolved oxygen. An anchor type stirrer was used to stir the solution at a rotational speed of 800 rpm. A hundred milliliters of an aqueous solution containing, dissolved therein, manganese sulfate pentahydrate (0.65 g), nickel sulfate hexahydrate (0.71 g), and hydrazine monohydrate (0.01 g) was prepared as a metal source solution. This solution was continuously dropped into the reaction vessel at a flow rate of 2.0 ml/min. Simultaneously with this, 5% ammonia solution was dropped thereinto at a flow rate of 0.6 ml/min and mixed. A 32% aqueous solution of sodium hydroxide was intermittently introduced into the reaction vessel so that the pH of the reaction solution was kept at 11.0 ± 0.1 throughout the dropping. Furthermore, a heater was intermittently operated so that the temperature of the solution in the reaction vessel was kept at 50°C. The mixture slurry obtained was filtered and water-washed repeatedly to remove unnecessary alkali ingredients and was then dried at 80°C overnight.

[0069]

The powder obtained was sieved to recover particles smaller than 75 μm . A lithium hydroxide monohydrate

powder was weighed out so that $\text{Li}/(\text{Ni}+\text{Mn}+\text{Co})=1.0$, and mixed with the particles by means of a planetary kneader. This mixture was charged into a pot made of alumina. Using an electric furnace, the mixture charged was, in a dry air stream, heated to 850°C at a heating rate of 100°C/hr , held at the temperature of 850°C for 15 hours, subsequently cooled to 200°C at a cooling rate of 100°C/hr , and then allowed to cool. The powder obtained was sieved to obtain a powder of $75\text{ }\mu\text{m}$.

[0070]

As a result of examination by X-ray diffractometry, the powder obtained was found to have a single-phase structure belonging to the space group $R3/m$. As a result of compositional analysis by plasma emission spectrometry (hereinafter also referred to simply as "ICP"), the composition was ascertained to be $\text{LiMn}_{0.005}\text{Ni}_{0.005}\text{Co}_{0.99}\text{O}_2$.

[0071]

(Example 2) Mn-Ni Coating Technique

A powder was obtained in the same manner as in Example 1, except that 25% aqueous ammonia (2 g) was used in place of the 25% aqueous ammonia (1 g) and that 100 ml of an aqueous solution containing, dissolved therein, manganese sulfate pentahydrate (1.3 g), nickel sulfate hexahydrate (1.41 g), and hydrazine monohydrate (0.01 g) was used as a metal source solution.

[0072]

As a result of examination by X-ray diffractometry, the powder obtained was found to have a single-phase structure belonging to the space group R3/m. As a result of ICP, the composition was ascertained to be $\text{LiMn}_{0.01}\text{Ni}_{0.01}\text{Co}_{0.98}\text{O}_2$.

[0073]

(Example 3) Mn-Ni Coating Technique

A powder was obtained in the same manner as in Example 1, except that 25% aqueous ammonia (5 g) was used in place of the 25% aqueous ammonia (1 g) and that 100 ml of an aqueous solution containing, dissolved therein, manganese sulfate pentahydrate (3.24 g), nickel sulfate hexahydrate (3.53 g), and hydrazine monohydrate (0.02 g) was used as a metal source solution.

[0074]

As a result of examination by X-ray diffractometry, the powder obtained was found to have a single-phase structure belonging to the space group R3/m. As a result of ICP, the composition was ascertained to be $\text{LiMn}_{0.025}\text{Ni}_{0.025}\text{Co}_{0.95}\text{O}_2$.

[0075]

(Example 4) Mn-Ni Coating Technique

A powder was obtained in the same manner as in Example 1, except that 25% aqueous ammonia (10 g) was used

in place of the 25% aqueous ammonia (1 g) and that 100 ml of an aqueous solution containing, dissolved therein, manganese sulfate pentahydrate (6.48 g), nickel sulfate hexahydrate (7.07 g), and hydrazine monohydrate (0.05 g) was used as a metal source solution.

[0076]

As a result of examination by X-ray diffractometry, the powder obtained was found to have a single-phase structure belonging to the space group R3/m. As a result of ICP, the composition was ascertained to be

$\text{LiMn}_{0.05}\text{Ni}_{0.05}\text{Co}_{0.90}\text{O}_2$.

[0077]

(Example 5) Coprecipitation Process

Into a closed type reaction vessel equal in shape to but different in size from the reaction vessel used in Example 1 was introduced 3.5 l of water. Thereto was added 32% aqueous sodium hydroxide solution so as to result in a pH of 11.6. A stirrer having paddle type stirring blades was used to stir the solution at a rotational speed of 1,200 rpm and the temperature of the solution in the reaction vessel was kept at 50°C with an external heater. Argon gas was bubbled into the solution in the reaction vessel to remove dissolved oxygen from the solution. A starting-material solution containing, dissolved therein, manganese sulfate pentahydrate (0.147

mol/l), nickel sulfate hexahydrate (0.147 mol/l), cobalt sulfate heptahydrate (1.464 mol/l), and hydrazine monohydrate (0.0101 mol/l) was prepared. This starting-material solution was continuously dropped into the reaction vessel at a flow rate of 3.17 ml/min. Simultaneously with this, 12 mol/l ammonia solution was dropped thereinto at a flow rate of 0.22 ml/min and mixed. A 32% aqueous solution of sodium hydroxide was intermittently introduced into the reaction vessel so that the pH of the solution in the reaction vessel was kept constant at 11.4. Furthermore, a heater was intermittently operated so that the temperature of the solution in the reaction vessel was kept constant at 50°C. Argon gas was directly bubbled into the liquid so that the atmosphere in the reaction vessel became a reducing atmosphere. Moreover, a flow pump was used to discharge a slurry from the system so that the liquid amount was always kept constant at 3.5 l. After 60 hours had passed since the reaction initiation and before 5 hours passed thereafter, a slurry of an Ni-Mn-Co composite oxide as a crystallization reaction product was taken out. The slurry obtained was washed with water, filtered, and dried at 80°C overnight to obtain a dry powder of an Ni-Mn-Co coprecipitated precursor.

[0078]

The Ni-Mn-Co coprecipitated precursor powder obtained was sieved to recover particles smaller than 75 μm . A lithium hydroxide monohydrate powder was weighed out so that $\text{Li}/(\text{Ni}+\text{Mn}+\text{Co})=1.0$, and mixed with the particles by means of a planetary kneader. This mixture was charged into a pot made of alumina. Using an electric furnace, the mixture charged was, in a dry air stream, heated to 850°C at a heating rate of 100°C/hr, held at the temperature of 850°C for 15 hours, subsequently cooled to 200°C at a cooling rate of 100°C/hr, and then allowed to cool. The powder obtained was sieved to obtain a powder consisting of particles of 75 μm or smaller.

[0079]

As a result of examination by X-ray diffractometry, the powder obtained was found to have a single-phase structure belonging to the space group R3/m. As a result of ICP, the composition was ascertained to be $\text{LiMn}_{0.0835}\text{Ni}_{0.0835}\text{Co}_{0.833}\text{O}_2$. This powder had a BET surface area of 0.8 m^2/g .

[0080]

(Comparative Example 1)

Tricobalt tetroxide and lithium carbonate were weighed out so as to result in an element ratio of 1:1, and were mixed together by means of a planetary kneader. This mixture was charged into a pot made of alumina.

Using an electric furnace, the mixture charged was, in a dry air stream, heated to 850°C at 100°C/hr, held at 850°C for 15 hours, cooled to 200°C at 100°C/hr, and then allowed to cool. The powder obtained was sieved to obtain a powder consisting of particles of 75 μm or smaller.

[0081]

As a result of examination by X-ray diffractometry, the powder obtained was found to have a single-phase structure belonging to the space group R3/m. As a result of ICP, the composition was ascertained to be LiCoO_2 .

[0082]

(Comparative Example 2)

A powder was obtained in the same manner as in Example 1, except that 25% aqueous ammonia (20 g) was used in place of the 25% aqueous ammonia (1 g) and that 100 ml of an aqueous solution containing, dissolved therein, manganese sulfate pentahydrate (21.4 g), nickel sulfate hexahydrate (23.3 g), and hydrazine monohydrate (0.2 g) was used as a metal source solution.

[0083]

As a result of examination by X-ray diffractometry, the powder obtained was found to have a single-phase structure belonging to the space group R3/m. As a result of ICP, the composition was ascertained to be $\text{LiMn}_{0.165}\text{Ni}_{0.165}\text{Co}_{0.70}\text{O}_2$.

[0084]

(Comparative Example 3)

A powder was obtained in the same manner as in Example 1, except that 25% aqueous ammonia (5 g) was used in place of the 25% aqueous ammonia (1 g) and that 100 ml of an aqueous solution containing, dissolved therein, manganese sulfate pentahydrate (3.89 g), nickel sulfate hexahydrate (2.83 g), and hydrazine monohydrate (0.02 g) was used as a metal source solution.

[0085]

As a result of examination by X-ray diffractometry, the powder obtained was found to have a single-phase structure belonging to the space group R3/m. As a result of ICP, the composition was ascertained to be $\text{LiMn}_{0.04}\text{Ni}_{0.01}\text{Co}_{0.95}\text{O}_2$.

[0086]

(Comparative Example 4)

A powder was obtained in the same manner as in Example 1, except that 25% aqueous ammonia (5 g) was used in place of the 25% aqueous ammonia (1 g) and that 100 ml of an aqueous solution containing, dissolved therein, manganese sulfate pentahydrate (2.59 g), nickel sulfate hexahydrate (4.24 g), and hydrazine monohydrate (0.02 g) was used as a metal source solution.

[0087]

As a result of examination by X-ray diffractometry, the powder obtained was found to have a single-phase structure belonging to the space group R3/m. As a result of ICP, the composition was ascertained to be $\text{LiMn}_{0.01}\text{Ni}_{0.04}\text{Co}_{0.95}\text{O}_2$.

[0088]

(Production of Non-aqueous Electrolyte Batteries)

Each of the powders obtained in Examples 1 to 5 and Comparative Examples 1 to 4 given above was used as a positive active material to produce a non-aqueous electrolyte battery shown in Fig. 1 by the following procedure. Thus, batteries of Examples 1 to 5 and batteries of Comparative Examples 1 to 4 were obtained using the respective powders.

[0089]

The positive active material, acetylene black, and poly(vinylidene fluoride) (PVdF) were mixed together in a ratio of 88:6:6 by weight. This poly(vinylidene fluoride) was used in the form of an N-methyl-2-pyrrolidone solution, and the amount thereof was converted to the weight on a solid basis. Thereto was further added N-methyl-2-pyrrolidone (NMP). This mixture was sufficiently kneaded to obtain a positive-electrode paste. The positive-electrode paste was applied to each side of an aluminum foil current collector having a thickness of 20 μm and

dried. Thereafter, the coated current collector was pressed to produce a positive-electrode sheet. The positive-electrode sheet was cut into a rectangular shape and an aluminum lead was attached to an end thereof. Thus, a positive electrode plate 7 was produced.

[0090]

Artificial graphite (average particle diameter, 6 μm ; lattice spacing as determined by X-ray diffractometry (d_{002}), 0.337 nm; crystallite size in c-axis direction (L_c), 55 nm) as negative-electrode material was mixed with poly(vinylidene fluoride) (PVdF) in a ratio of 95:5 by weight. This poly(vinylidene fluoride) was used in the form of an N-methyl-2-pyrrolidone solution, and the amount thereof was converted to the weight on a solid basis. Thereto was further added N-methyl-2-pyrrolidone (NMP). This mixture was sufficiently kneaded to obtain a negative-electrode paste. The negative-electrode paste was applied to each side of an electrolytic copper foil having a thickness of 12 μm and dried. Thereafter, the coated copper foil was pressed to produce a negative-electrode sheet. The negative-electrode sheet was cut into a rectangular shape and a copper lead was attached to an end thereof. Thus, a negative electrode plate 9 was produced.

[0091]

LiPF_6 was dissolved in a concentration of 1 mol/l in a mixed solvent prepared by mixing ethylene carbonate and diethyl carbonate in a ratio of 1:1 by volume. Thus, a non-aqueous electrolyte was produced. This non-aqueous electrolyte had a water content regulated to below 20 ppm.

[0092]

The positive electrode plate 7 and the negative electrode plate 9 were dried under reduced pressure at 120°C for 12 hours. Subsequently, the positive electrode plate 7 was inserted into a bag, as a separator 8, obtained by forming a microporous polyethylene film into a bag shape. The positive electrode plate 7 with the separator 8 and the negative electrode plate 9 were alternately stacked in this order to obtain an electrode group composed of forty sheets of the positive electrode plate 7 with the separator and forty-one sheets of the negative electrode plate 9.

[0093]

The electrode group was wrapped in an insulating film made of a polyethylene resin, and housed in a prismatic battery case 10 made of aluminum. The leads of each positive electrode plate 7 and of each negative electrode plate 9 were connected respectively to a positive terminal 5 and a negative terminal 4 attached to a cap 2 made of aluminum and having a safety vent 1. The

positive terminal 5 and negative terminal 4 had been insulated from the cap 2 with a gasket 6 made of a polypropylene resin.

[0094]

The cap 2 and the battery case 10 were laser-welded together at a laser-welded part 3. The non-aqueous electrolyte described above was charged into the battery case 10, which was then sealed. Thereafter, constant-current low-voltage charge at a current of 0.1 ItA (10 hour rates) and 4.2 V was conducted, and constant-current discharge at a current of 0.1 ItA (10 hour rates) was conducted to a final voltage of 3.0 V. Thus, a prismatic non-aqueous electrolyte battery was obtained.

[0095]

(Initial Charge/Discharge Test)

With respect to each of the batteries of Examples 1 to 5 and batteries of Comparative Examples 1 to 4, two or more battery samples were subjected to ten cycles of initial charge/discharge at a temperature of 20°C. The charge was constant-current constant-voltage charge conducted under the conditions of a current of 0.1 ItA (10 hour rates) and 4.2 V, while the discharge was constant-current discharge conducted under the conditions of a current of 0.1 ItA (10 hour rates) and a final voltage of 3.0 V. The discharge capacity obtained in this test is

referred to as "initial discharge capacity (mAh/g)".

[0096]

(High-Rate Discharge Test)

Subsequently, a high-rate discharge test was conducted at a temperature of 20°C. The charge was constant-current constant-voltage charge conducted under the conditions of 0.2 ItA (5 hour rates) and 4.2 V, while the discharge was constant-current discharge conducted under the conditions of a current of 2.0 ItA (0.5 hour rates) and a final voltage of 3.0 V. The percentage of the discharge capacity in this test to the initial discharge capacity is referred to as "high-rate discharge performance value (%)".

[0097]

(High-Temperature Charge Test)

A high-temperature charge test was conducted in the following manner. With respect to each of the batteries of Examples 1 to 5 and batteries of Comparative Examples 1 to 4, two or more battery samples in an end-of-discharge state were prepared. These batteries were placed in a thermostatic chamber having a set temperature of 60°C, and the temperature of the batteries was ascertained with a contact thermometer to have fully reached 60°C. Thereafter, constant-current constant-voltage charge at 0.2 ItA (5 hour rates) and 4.2 V was conducted, and the charge

amperehour was measured. Using the following equation, the "high-temperature charge capacity increase ratio (%)" was calculated.

$$\begin{aligned} & \text{High-temperature charge capacity increase ratio (\%)} \\ &= \{(\text{charge amperehour in high-temperature charge test}) - \\ & \quad (\text{charge amperehour in initial charge/discharge test})\} / (\text{charge amperehour in initial charge/discharge test}) \times 100 \end{aligned}$$

The results of the battery tests described above are shown in Table 1. An explanation is given on Table 1. The chemical composition formula for the positive active material used in each of the Examples and Comparative Examples is shown. The value of $|b-c|$ and the value of d for each of these positive active materials represented by the (chemical composition formula 1) " $\text{Li}_a\text{Mn}_b\text{Ni}_c\text{Co}_d\text{O}_e$ " are shown. The "initial discharge capacity (mAh/g)", the "high-rate discharge performance value (%)", and the "high-temperature charge capacity increase ratio (%)" are shown.

[0098]

Furthermore, with respect to the results of the tests of the batteries of Examples 1 to 5, which employed a positive active material in which $c=b$, and the battery of Comparative Examples 1 and 2, the values of the "high-

rate discharge performance value (%)" and the "high-temperature charge capacity increase ratio (%)" are plotted against the values of d and shown in Fig. 2 and Fig. 3.

[0099]

[Table 1]

Battery	Composition	b-cl	d	Initial discharge capacity (mAh/g)	High-rate discharge performance value (%)	High-temperature charge capacity increase (%)
Ex. 1	$\text{LiMn}_{0.005}\text{Ni}_{0.005}\text{Co}_{0.99}\text{O}_2$	0.00	0.99	153	92	1.9
Ex. 2	$\text{LiMn}_{0.01}\text{Ni}_{0.01}\text{Co}_{0.98}\text{O}_2$	0.00	0.98	148	92	2.0
Ex. 3	$\text{LiMn}_{0.025}\text{Ni}_{0.025}\text{Co}_{0.95}\text{O}_2$	0.00	0.95	149	95	1.6
Ex. 4	$\text{LiMn}_{0.05}\text{Ni}_{0.05}\text{Co}_{0.90}\text{O}_2$	0.00	0.90	150	95	1.7
Ex. 5	$\text{LiMn}_{0.0835}\text{Ni}_{0.0835}\text{Co}_{0.833}\text{O}_2$	0.00	0.83	152	92	2.5
Comp. Ex. 1	LiCoO_2	-	1.00	156	83	3.7
Comp. Ex. 2	$\text{LiMn}_{0.165}\text{Ni}_{0.165}\text{Co}_{0.67}\text{O}_2$	0.00	0.67	151	88	5.0
Comp. Ex. 3	$\text{LiMn}_{0.04}\text{Ni}_{0.01}\text{Co}_{0.95}\text{O}_2$	0.03	0.95	146	92	3.0
Comp. Ex. 4	$\text{LiMn}_{0.01}\text{Ni}_{0.04}\text{Co}_{0.95}\text{O}_2$	0.03	0.95	151	94	4.0

[0100]

Those results show the following. First, a comparison in battery test results between the batteries of Examples 1 to 5, which employed a positive active material in which $|b-c|=0$ in (chemical composition formula 1), and Comparative Examples 1 and 2 show that the batteries of Examples 1 to 5, in which $d<1$, had significantly improved high-rate discharge performance as compared with the comparative battery 1, in which $d=1$, while retaining a high discharge capacity. Especially in the case where $d\geq 0.8$, the high-rate discharge performance improved in higher degrees.

[0101]

In addition, when $0.8\leq d<1$, the high-temperature charge capacity increase ratio was extremely smaller. Namely, a positive active material inhibited from suffering excessive lithium ion extraction therefrom in high-temperature charge was obtained.

[0102]

Next, a comparison in battery test results between the battery of Example 3, in which the value of d in (chemical composition formula 1) was 0.95 and the batteries of Comparative Examples 3 and 4, shows that the high-temperature charge capacity increase ratio was even more significantly reduced when $|b-c|<0.03$.

[0103]

Regardless of whether the "Mn-Ni coating technique" in which a cobalt compound is coated with manganese and nickel is employed or the "coprecipitation process" in which manganese, nickel, and cobalt are coprecipitated is employed, the diffraction lines observed by X-ray diffractometry are limited to ones attributable to a single-phase structure of R3/m as long as the element constitution is within the range shown in Examples 1 to 5. This is supported by the fact that the products have the same tendency concerning electrical properties. It is presumed that when the proportion of cobalt is high as in these Examples, a single compound has been yielded because cobalt has high susceptibility to sintering.

[0104]

For synthesizing a positive active material of the invention, either the "coprecipitation process" or the "Mn-Ni coating technique" may be used as described above. However, the inventors have ascertained that when the amount of Mn+Ni exceeds the range of the invention, (when the value of d is 0.7 or smaller), the "coprecipitation process" is more efficient than the "coating technique". This is because too large a coating amount may result in the separation of the manganese and nickel deposited on the cobalt compound, and because the manganese and nickel

are highly likely to react with lithium before diffusion with cobalt and this is causative of the formation of an impurity phase.

[Brief Description of the Drawings]

[Fig. 1] Fig. 1 is a sectional view of the batteries of the present invention;

[Fig. 2] Fig. 2 is a graph showing the relationship between the chemical composition of a positive active material and a battery performance.

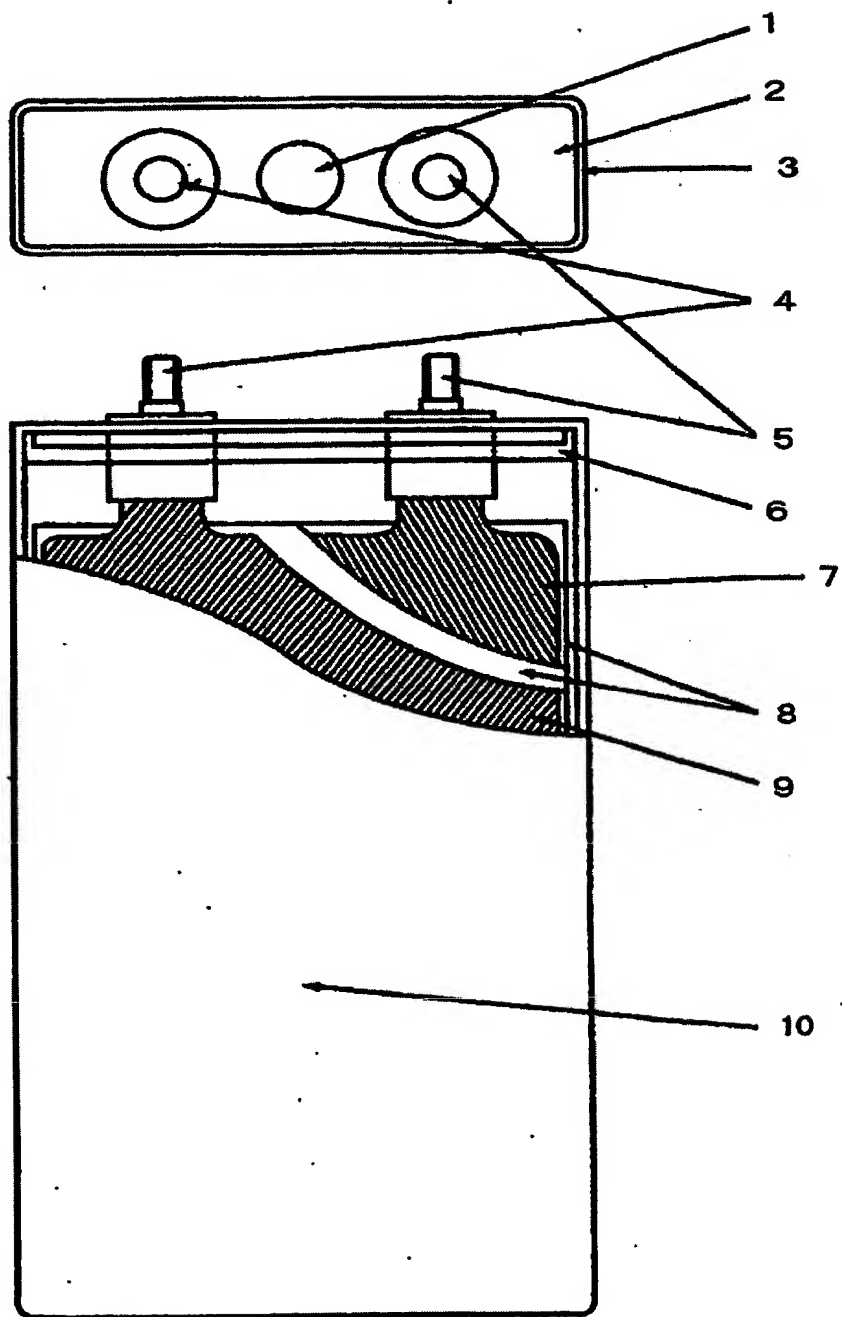
[Fig. 3] Fig. 3 is a graph showing the relationship between the chemical composition of a positive active material and a battery performance.

[Description of Reference Numerals and Signs]

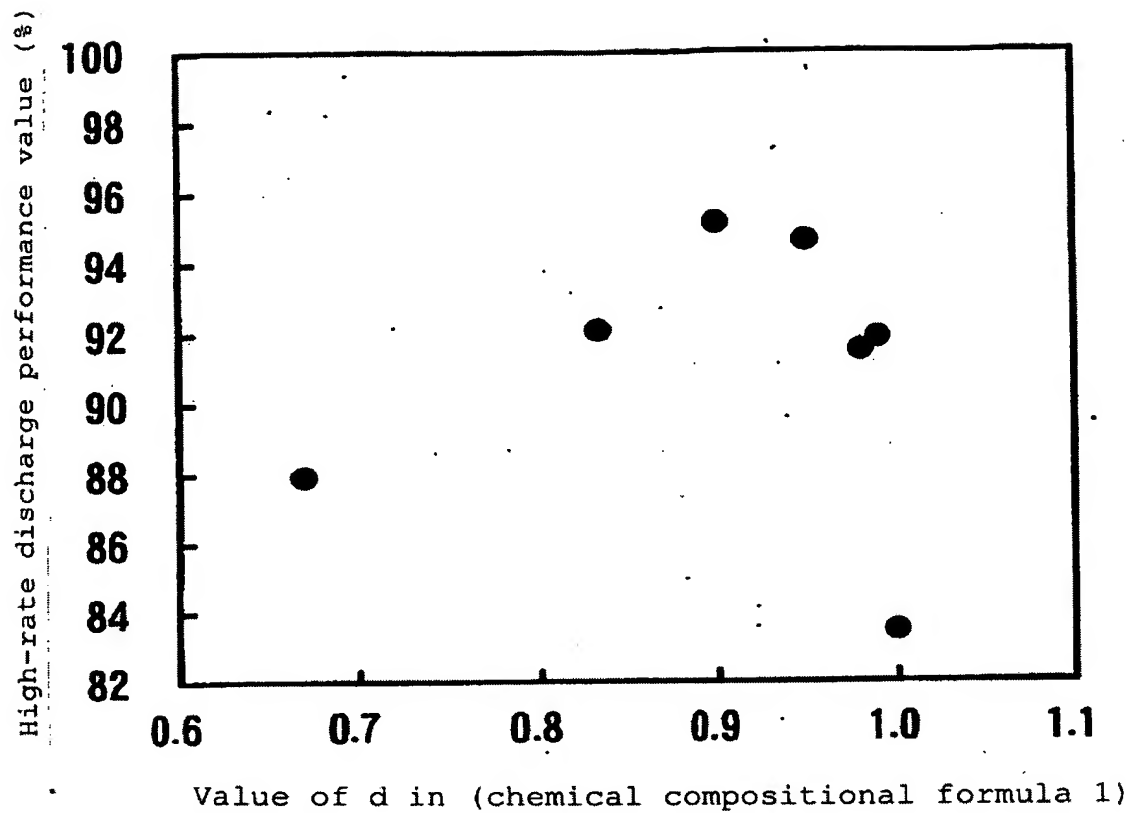
- 1 safety vent
- 2 cap
- 3 laser-welded part
- 4 negative terminal
- 5 positive terminal
- 6 gasket
- 7 positive electrode plate
- 8 separator
- 9 negative electrode plate
- 10 battery case

[Designation of Document] Drawings

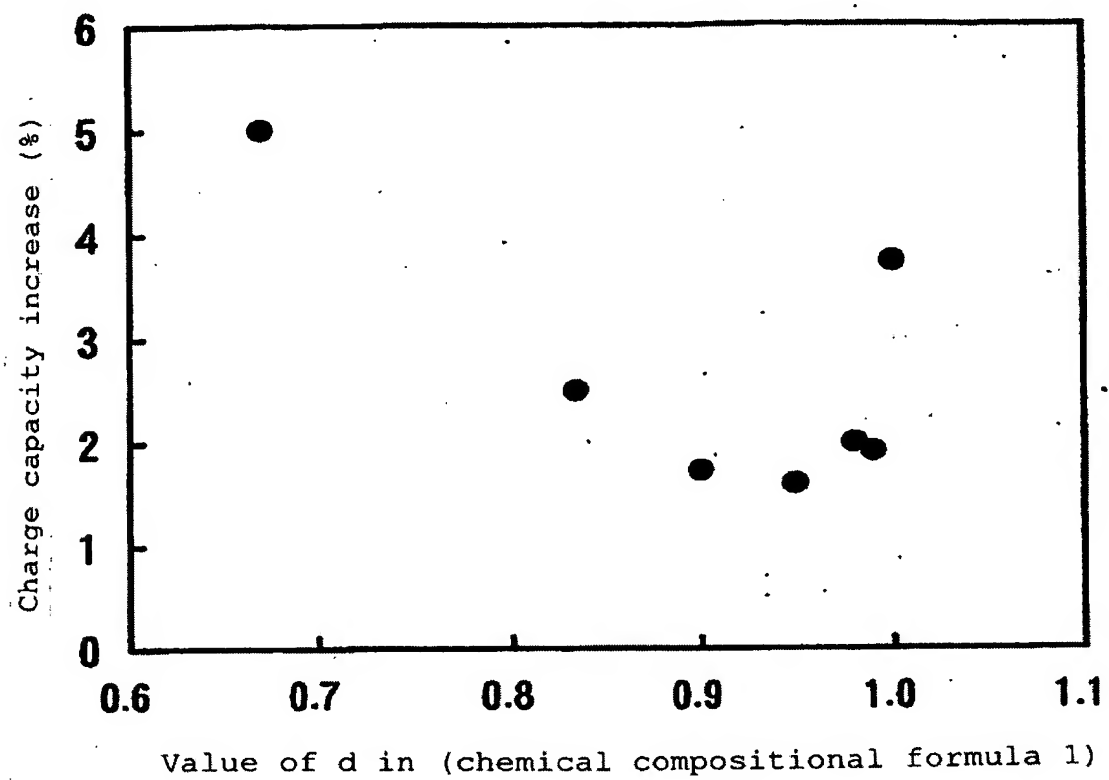
[Fig. 1]



[Fig. 2]



[Fig. 3]



[Designation of Document] Abstract

[Abstract]

[Problem] An object of the invention is to provide a positive active material which can give a battery having a high energy density and excellent high-rate discharge performance and inhibited from decreasing in battery performance even in the case of high-temperature charge, and to provide a non-aqueous electrolyte battery employing the positive active material.

[Means for Resolution] The problem can be dissolved by using a positive active material including a composite oxide which is constituted of at least lithium (Li), manganese (Mn), nickel (Ni), cobalt (Co), and oxygen (O) and is represented by the following chemical composition formula:

$\text{Li}_a\text{Mn}_b\text{Ni}_c\text{Co}_d\text{O}_e$ (Chemical composition formula 1)

(wherein $0 < a < 1.3$

$|b - c| < 0.03$

$0.8 \leq d < 1$

$1.7 \leq e \leq 2.3$

$b + c + d = 1$).

[Selected Drawing] Fig. 2